A LETTER

unto a PERSON of HONOUR and QUALITY,

Containing some

Animadversions

Upon the

BISHOP of *WORCESTER's*

LETTER.

LONDON,

Printed in the Year, 1662.

UM

Honorable and worthy Sir,

I am to thank You for the laſt piece of Divertiſement you gave me, in ſending the Biſhop of *Worceſter*'s Letter, and I wiſh you would have let me enjoyed the ſatisfaction I took in reading it, without obliging me to give my ſenſe upon it: For beſides my unwillingneſs to meddle in a perſonal quarrel, it will not, I think, be very ſafe far any to engage againſt ſo angry an Adverſary, which I ſhall be thought to do, though I reſolve to ſpeak nothing but Truth in the Character I intend to give of him: And it is briefly this; That, in fewer leaves I never yet read more paſſion, which is ſo very predominant, that his diſorderly and abrupt ſtile doth altogether partake of it; ſo that the Biſhop's beſt way will be, to get his Heat miſtaken for Zeal, for elſe it may be juſtly accounted ſomething that hath a worſe Name, and which, in the Dog-daies will be very dangerous.

This being, Sir, my Judgment upon the whole Letter, You may well expect that I ſhould make it good, by an Induction from particular Inſtances; but before I do this I muſt deal impartially, and aſſure you, that as to the main Controverſie, I think the Biſhop hath much the better of Mr. *Baxter*: For, if the queſtion between them, was as Dr: *Gunning* and Dr: *Pearſon* do atteſt, ſuch a command is ſo evidently lawfull, that I ſhall much wonder if Mr. *Baxter* did ever diſpute it; and till he doth clearly diſprove that that was not the thing in queſtion, I muſt needs think that he hath much forgot himſelf in making an imperfect and partial Relation.

Setting aſide therefore the buſineſs of that particular Conteſt (wherein you ſee how much I am inclined to favour the Biſhop) there are other things in his Letter of general concernment, which I think liable to juſt exception; As,

Firſt, That he ſuppoſeth there is ſo ſtrict an Union, and ſo inſeparable a Dependence between *Kings and Biſhops, that they muſt ſtand and fall together, and all who are enemies to the one muſt needs be enemies to the other.* I know very well this

Axiom is much talked of, and some advantage may be taken to confirm it, from the event of our late Wars: You know likewise, Sir, how much my Judgment is for the Order of Bishops; and how Passionate a Lover I am both of the Kings Person and Government, but yet, being thus called by You to declare the truth, though contrary to my own Humour and Interest, I must needs say, 1. It is clear from Story, that *Kings* were in all parts of the world, in their most flourishing Estate, before ever *Bishops* were heard of; and no reason can be given, why what hath once been, may not with the same terms of convenience be again. 2. *Bishops*, as they are by Law established in *England*, are purely the *Kings subordinate Ministers, in the management of Ecclesiastical Affairs*; which his Majesty may conferr upon what order of men he pleases, though they be as much *Lay persons* as You and I are. It is therefore very injurious to the *Kings Authority*, to averr that He could not otherwise uphold and maintain it, than by preserving the Undue, and, as some think, Antichristian Dignity and Prelation of his inferiour Officers. 3. *Bishops* are so little usefull to support the *Regal Dignity* (which is founded upon a distinct Basis of its own) that upon enquiry it will be found, how none have been greater enemies to the True and Undoubted Soveraignty of Princes, than some Bishops themselves: for by their Officious, and scarce warrantable, intermedling in Civil Affairs; by their Absurd and Insignificant distinguishing between *Civil* and *Ecclesiastical Causes* (of which last they have alwaies made themselves sole Judges) they mangle the Kings Authority, and as to *Church-matters* (which may be extended as far as they please) they leave the King nothing of *Supremacy* but the Name. The *Pope* of *Rome* therefore (who is the great Father of all such Bishops) hath improved this Notion and Distinction so far, that *in ordine ad spiritualia*, he hath laboured to subject all Civil Empires unto his sole Jurisdiction. So that if the Bishop of *Worcester*'s Rule hold good, of *Crimine ab uno—Disce omnes*, i.e. *That all men who are of a party may be judged of by the miscarriages of one*, then I must leave it to You to judge, what all those Bishops, that are of the Bishop of *Worcester*'s complexion, do really drive at, by the fatal example of that one Bishops Usurpation: For,

Tag. 21.

Secondly,

Secondly, That Assertion, *that the Bishop of Worcester* (and consequently every other Bishop) *is the sole Pastor of all the* Pag. 2, & 3
Congregations in his Dioceß, if it be at all defensible, I am sure can be defended only by those Arguments, which are commonly alledged to maintain the *Popes Supremacy* over all Churches whatever. For since a Bishop can no otherwise discharge his duty herein, than by providing *Substitutes*, what hinders but the *Bishop of Rome* may as well oversee a million of Churches, as the Bishop of *Worcester* five hundred? Since if Deputation be lawfull, more or lesse compasse and circuit of ground doth not at all alter the case. I forbear to urge how contrary this Practice is to the Doctrine of the Apostles, both *Paul* and *Peter* (I hope the Bishop will not take it ill that I do not call them *Saints*, for these *Holy men* do not need any stile of Honour out of the *Popes Kalendar*,) When *Paul* had sent for the *Elders of the Church at Ephesus*, he bids them *to feed the Church of God, over which* (not he himself, Act. 20. 2
by his sole Authority, as Bishop of the Dioceße, but) *the Spirit of God had made them* Ἐπισκόπους, i. e. *Overseers*, or to 1 Pet. 5. 2
use the proper stile, *Bishops*. And Peter commands his *Fellow Elders*, (for so doth that Apostle condescend to call himself) *to feed the Flock which was among them*, Ἐπισκοποῦντες, *Overseeing*, or *Acting the Bishops*, *not* (like the Bishop of *Worcester*) *as Lording it over Gods Heritage*, *but as Patterns of the Flock*. From which places we learn, not only that those two so much controverted Names of *Bishop* and *Presbyter*, are without distinction ascribed to the same Persons, but likewise, that whoever *feed the Flock*, are, *under Christ* (whom the Apostle there stiles the *Chief Shepheard*) the next and immediate *Pastors* of the *Flock*; and to extend the *Pastorall Power* beyond the actual care of *Feeding*, is a Notion altogether unscriptural, and likewise leaves us no bounds where to fix, till we come to centre upon some one *Universal Pastor*, who may claim this Power over the whole world, by the same parity of reason, that a Bishop doth over one *Dioceße*.

Thirdly, It seems to be a Light, and (to say no more) unseemly trifling with sacred Scripture, to affirm that those words of our Saviour concerning such as *come not in by the* Pag. 3
door, and therefore *are Thieves and Robbers*, ought to be understood

underſtood of ſuch *Miniſters, as preach to Congregations without the Biſhops Licenſe.* Which thing, the Biſhop (in great Heat and Earneſtneſſe, as if he had done very well in it) tels us more than once, that it was *the Principal reaſon why he ſilenced* Mr. *Baxter.* Truly if this practiſe be juſtificable, and thoſe who deſign themſelves *to preach the Goſpel*, muſt, beſides their *Ordination*, procure a *Licenſe from a Biſhop*, to do that, which a *Woe* is denounced againſt, if they offer to omit, then 1. I ſee not what *Ordination* ſignifies, ſince the Power that then is given, no Authority from Man can take away, any more than diſſolve the Contract of a Marriage, much leſſe empeach and hinder the free uſe of it, except for Moral and notoriouſly vicious Miſdemeanours. 2. For one *Miniſter of the Goſpel* (for certainly a *Biſhop* is no more) to Silence another, and that for no better Reaſon, than becauſe his Fellow-Miniſter is deſirous to preach the Goſpel without a *new Licenſe*, this is an abuſe of Dominion, which as our Saviour doth no where countenance, ſo the firſt Ages of the Church were altogether unacquainted with. For the *Biſhop*'s Inſtance of our Saviour's *putting to ſilence the Scribes and Phariſees* is both Impertinent and Falſe, becauſe our Saviour did only *ſilence them by Argument*, which the Biſhop may do when ever he is able; but what is that to an Authoritative and Imperious commanding men to be Silent. Beſides, even then when our Saviour was moſt ſtrict in pronouncing Woes againſt the *Phariſees*, in that very Chapter, he is ſo far from forbidding the *Phariſees* to preach, that he commands his Diſciples both to hear and to obey their Doctrine. So that ſince the Biſhop will needs have the *Presbyterians* to be *Phariſees*, let him but allow them the ſame Liberty of Teaching the People, as our Saviour did the other, and I believe they will not (at leaſt were I a *Presbyterian* I ſhould not) envy his Lordſhip, either his Title or Maintenance, how undue and unmerited ſoever they both be. And though the Biſhop is pleaſed to ſay, That the *Presbyterians* preach nothing but *Sedition and Treaſon* (which is moſt falſe, as being directly contrary to their declared Principles) yet the *Phariſees* taught ſomthing worſe, and that was Blaſphemy: Yet our Saviour (who ſure had more power, and withal more care of his Church than the Biſhop of *Worceſter*) did not go about by force to pro-

hibit

hibit them. I wish therefore, that this Bishop and the rest of his Brethren (if any are Cholerick and Testy enough to be of his mind) would consider, that as by silencing their Fellow Ministers, for such frivolous and slight pretences, they usurp a Power, which Christ never gave, so at the last day he will not thank them for the Exercise of it.

Fourthly, How consistent with the Civil Peace (for as to Christian Charity, the whole thing is but a Letter of defiance against it) the Bishops Distinction is about the Act of Indempnity, and (the so much forgotten) Act of Oblivion, I hope His Majesty and the Parliament will in due time consider. For he is so hardy as to tel us, *That the King by it only pardoned the corporal punishment; but the Church had not, nor ought not to forgive the scandal, till honourable amends were made her by confession and Recantation.* Where by speaking of the Church, as distinct from the State, (I mean in point of Coercive Jurisdiction) the Bishop would make us believe, that after His Majesty and the Parliament have forgiven men their Civil Crimes, there is still another Power, which he cals *the Church*, unto which they are still accountable, even so far as to make a Publick Recantation. Here I wish the Bishop would have spoken out of the Clouds, and plainly told us what he meant by *the Church:* For if it be *a Congregation of the Faithfull met together for the worship of God*, as the Definition of Scripture, and of the *Church of England* is in the 39 Articles; this will not at all advantage him, since such a Church hath no Coercive or Imposing Power: But if he means the *Hierarchy* or *Ecclesiastical State*, by Arch-Bishops, Bishops, &c. there can be nothing more false, or more dishonorable unto our Civil Government, than to affirm that it lies in their power, not only to punish, but likewise to exact a *Recantation*, for those faults which the King and Parliament have not only pardoned, but under severe penalties commanded should never more be remembred: And therefore I doubt not, but they will resent this Malicious and Ill-grounded Fancy. And since the Bishop is so over-zealous for the very Letter of the Law, when it imposes Ceremonies, give me leave a little to wonder, that one of his Profession and Place in the Church should so unchristianly go against it; when it enjoyns Moderation and Forgiveness as to Civil Injuries. Such as he, who make the Law, instead Pag. 8.

of

of being a *Buckler* to protect *Converts*, a *Sword* only to cut off all such as were once Offenders, labour what they can to make men Desperate, and thereby render the peace of the Nation, and in that the prosperity and welfare of His Majesty very insecure and hazardous. For what can more enrage Men to take wild and forbidden courses, than to see even Preachers of the Gospel strive to widen their wounds, and contrary to their own former Professions, to pull off that Plaister, which the wisdom of our State-Physitians had provided to heal our Distempers.

Fifthly, It is bold and impious (I know not how to express
ag 11. it more mildly) what he affirms, That *If to command an Act, which by accident may prove an occasion of sin, be sinfull, then God himself cannot command any thing.* For, though, as I said before, I will by no means own that Assertion, yet, a thing which by accident may become sinful, may be unlawful in another to command, for want of sufficient Authority; whereas God's Sovereign power doth without dispute or controversie make all his Commands to be just; and therefore his Name ought not to be mentioned in our trivial Disputes, because every such vain use of it, is nothing but a diminution and lessening of his Greatness.

Sixthly, *That an offence, to which a disproportionable penalty is annexed, is not to be measured by the quality of the Act considered in it self, but by the mischievous consequences it may produce*; whether this ought to hold good in Civil Laws, becoms neither the Bishop nor me to dispute: but in Divinity nothing can be more false and dangerous. For to impose in the Worship of God as necessary circumstances of it, things confessedly trivial and needless; and, upon the forbearance of them, to debar any from the benefits first of Christian, and then of Civil Communion; is a thing which hath not the least pretence of Scripture or Primitive practice to justifie it. For, our Saviour tels us, That *whoever were not against him were for him*; and the Apostle bids us *to receive our weak Brother, and not to judge*, much less to *burden his Conscience*. Unto which sacred Canon nothing can be more directly contrary, than what the Bishop most incompassionately tels us, *That the Laws do well to punish, even with non-admission to the Sacrament, such as will not, or perhaps dare not, kneel.* And the Reason he gives is equally

equally *Apocrypha*, *Because*, saith he, *it becomes not the Law-givers to endanger the Churches peace for their sake:* As if first, It did not much more become all Law-givers, in the things of God, to observe the Law of Christ, which is a Law of *Love* and *Liberty*. Secondly, As if the Churches peace would not be much more endangered, by the pressing of things doubtful, than by the forbearance of them. For since by the enforcing of such things, as God hath no where commanded, our Christian liberty is infringed; from hence it follows, that, if we ought not, yet we lawfully may refuse, to submit unto such Impositions; as our Saviour did, *in not washing his hands before meat*; and the Apostle *Paul*, in the case of *Circumcision*.

Seventhly, as for the Chain of Consequences, which the Bishop links and ties together: As that *Diversity in external Rites, ariseth Dislike; from Dislike, Enmity; from Enmity, opposition; thence, Schism in the Church, and Sedition in the State*: For proof of which he doth very virulently instance in our unhappy times. To prevent which he tels us, That *the State cannot be safe without the Church, nor the Church without Unity, nor Unity without Uniformity, nor uniformity without a strict and rigorous Imposition.* To all this I answer, that it is a meer Rope of sand, and the parts of his Chain do as little hang together, as *Sampsons* Foxes did before they were tied by the Tails, which course the Bishop hath imitated, not forgetting to put in even the *Firebrand* it self to make up the Comparison: For, 1. Nothing is more clear than that there hath been, nay, ought to be, *Diversity in external Forms*, without any *Dislike* at all as to the Person of another: For, the *Apostles that preached to the circumcision* gave the right hand of Fellowship unto the *Apostles* of the *Gentiles*; although their *Outward Rites* in publick Worship, were far more different than those, which, by any of the most distant perswasions, are now practised in *England*. 2. The *State* may be preserved, without the least reference to the *Church*, unless it turns Persecuter of it; as is evident in those 300 years before *Constantine*'s time, in which there was no Church at all legally countenanced; and for some scores of years after, both the Christians and Gentiles were equally advanced and favoured. 3. *Unity*, I mean such as Christ came to establish (which is an *Unity* in heart and spirit) doth not in the least depend upon *Uniformity*, but upon *Charity*, *i.e.* a Christian and a Candid forbearance of

one another in things *circumſtantial*, when we agree in the *Eſſentials of Worſhip*; which is a thing that meer Civility would teach, though Religion were ſilent in it. And whereas the Biſhop thinks he hath got ſome advantage, by reviving the memory of our late Civil Wars, which (were he either Chriſtian or Man enough, he would wiſh were eternally buried in ſilence) I muſt (to uſe his own Phraſe) *tell him in his ear*, that our Wars did not ariſe from the ſeparation of Conſcientious diſſentors, but from the violence and fury of unconcionable Impoſers, who would not allow their Brethren (who deſired nothing more than to live peaceably by them) that ſober liberty which the Law of God commanded, and no Law of Man could juſtly deprive them of. And whether the publick maintaining of the very ſame Poſitions and Practiſes, may not in time beget the ſame Feuds and Animoſities, although this Biſhop cares not, yet I doubt not but His Majeſty, as he now doth, ſo will always graciouſly conſider.

Eightly, Whether, as to the matter of Fact, the *French Proteſtants* do enjoyn *ſtanding* at the *Sacrament*; & the *Dutch*, *kneeling*; I will labour to enform my ſelf of ſome more Unbyaſſed witneſs than this Biſhop; for in the *Eccleſiaſtical Laws* of thoſe *Churches*, which I have carefully peruſed, I can find no ſuch matter. But if they did ſo, this would not at all juſtifie the Impoſition of *Kneeling*; becauſe 1. The Queſtion is *de Jure*, whether it be lawful to preſcribe any one ſuch certain Poſture, without ſubmiting to which, it ſhall not be lawful to admit any to the Sacrament, and till the Affirmative of this be proved by Scriptures, Examples, and Inſtances from the Practice of men, will not ſatisfie a doubting conſcience. 2. Neither of thoſe fore-mentioned Poſtures are ſo much to exception as *Kneeling*; becauſe this laſt is manifeſtly more ſuperſtitious, for, 1. It varies moſt of any from the *Firſt Pattern*. 2. It hath been monſtrouſly abuſed by the *Papiſts* to *Idolatry*; which alone renders it moſt Unſafe to be practiſed, and moſt Unwarrantable to be impoſed: Eſpecially, till it be again explained, as in the very firſt *Liturgy* of all it was; which I particulary mention, to ſhew how little our *Reformation* ſince *Edw.6th.* time, hath been improved.

Laſtly, As it was needleſly, ſo was it likewiſe Uncharitably done, to revile the whole body of *Presbyterians* for the Faults of Mr. *Baxter*; upon ſuppoſition that either he is a *Presbyterian*, or ſo culpable as the Biſhop would make him. For ſince every man

is *to bear his own Burden*, what Bible did the Bishop find it in, that he might, without scruple, aspersea whole order of Men, for the pretended miscarriage of one; who, by the Bishop's own Confession, was not of so Amicable and compliant a Temper as the rest: And therefore certainly they ought not to be brought in as Parties in that crime of Unpeaceableness, from which the Bishop just before had absolved them: but choler spoyls the Memory; and, sure his Brethren the Bishops would not take it well of a *Presbyterian*, should he cry out *Crimine ab uno, disce omnes*—*See what manner of Spirit these Bishops are of, and judge them all by the Bishop of Worcesters example.* Truly, Sir, I am a little angry, when I consider how much this one mans Indiscretion hath exposed all of the same Order to Censure; For were they all like him (which I do not, nor dare not think) I should not scruple to pray heartily, what the *Bishop* doth in scorn concerning the Preachers—*Lord deliver us from such Bishops.* And let all the People say, *Amen.*

Thus, Sir, you see how willing I am to serve you in proposing my Exceptions, the fuller prosecution of which I must leave to some other Pen, more able both in *Divinity* and *Policy*; who may convince, both the Bishop and the World, that it is not yet time to sow such *Tares*; This Age is a little too knowing to be gulled with an Αὐτὸς ἔφη, or to take every thing for Oracle which a Bishops Passion dictates. But before I ease you of your Trouble in reading this, I will crave leave to give you a Taste of the *Reverend Father*'s deep wisdom in two or three particulars.

1. In that he declaimes, so fircely, as if he would crack his Girdle, against all those *who force all Communicants to come unto them and be particularly examined before they admit them to the Sacrament.* Indeed, Sir, this was an Imposition, as no way Justifiable, so, for ought I can hear, no where practised. The Custome being that men were only once for all examined, at their first coming to the Sacrament; which the Bishop himself allows under other Names of being Catechised and Instructed. It was therefore wisely done of the Bishop, this cold weather to set up a *Man of straw*, and then get himself heat by threshing it.

2. It is me-thinks very politickly done to exclaim against the poor *Covenant*, and in great zeal to wish all the *Books which defend it*, *were burnt by the Authors, to save the Hangman a labour.* For here let his Adversary do what he can, the Bishop will be too

hard for him: For if he takes no notice of the Covenant, the Bishop clearly gains the Cause; if he ventures to assert it, he shall presently be confuted with a Confiscation. So that under the shelter of this unanswerable *Dilemma* I leave him, lest I should be gored with the Horns of it. And this I speak, Sir, as one that though I never took, but alwaies opposed the Covenant; yet I have a very good opinion of many that did, and withal a great Tenderness for the lawful part of an Oath, after it is once solemnly taken. I will only add this, That since that Oath hath been so generally taken, even by those that were most active in his late Majesties service; and several times ventured their lives, to signalize their Loyalty; I think the Ashes of it (since it was burnt by publick Authority) had much better have been suffered to rest quietly, than thus to be blown up and scattered abroad by the Bishops furious breath, when no occasion was given him so much as to mention it.

Lastly, I can never enough commend the Bishops wisdom, in resolving so angrily never to write again; for he is Old, and hath Travelled far, and knows that it is much easier to speak rash and unjustifiable things than to defend them. And therefore he deals with those, that he hath provoked, as witty School-boyes do with their Companions, first he hits them a box on the Ear, and then very discreetly retreats, and fairly runs away. But if *Goliah*, who took upon him to defie the Host of *Israel*, should, as soon as ever he had done, have sneaked out of the Field, and thought he had done manfully enough in making a Bold Challenge, and in shewing his Teeth at them; I believe the *Philistines* would hardly have thanked him for that empty shew of Valour, whereby he could not conquer, but onely enrage the Enemy. And whether the *Bishops* will not have the same opinion of this over-forward and unwary Champion of theirs, I hope, Sir, you will neither enquire your self, nor desire that I should: For I have already done enough to shew how much I am,

Jan. 21. SIR,

Your most humble Servant,

D.E.

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